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New York

President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons

Agenda item 103 (*continued*)

Crime prevention and criminal justice

Mr. Kommasith (Lao People's Democratic Republic): At the outset, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for having organized this important high-level meeting to review the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

Human trafficking constitutes a grave violation of fundamental human rights. It deprives our young people, women and children of their most basic human rights. Unfortunately, it has also become a lucrative business for those who perpetuate it. Such violations of fundamental human rights continue to pose a serious threat to our societies, especially to the most vulnerable groups of people, such as women and children, who make up 60 per cent of the total victims in many parts of the world.

Against that backdrop, the effective implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action and other relevant international anti-trafficking instruments is a matter of urgency. Although a number of anti-trafficking measures and undertakings have been adopted and carried out over the years, their implementation on the ground has not yet been adequately effective in preventing further crime and sparing victims. It is important for more efforts to be exerted at all levels, and for greater focus to be given to the root causes of such crimes.

We all admit that poverty is one of the root causes of human trafficking. It is often impoverished communities that are likely to be drawn to human trafficking. Poverty can coerce innocent people to perpetuate such crimes, as it is an easy way to earn income, and poverty can make innocent people victims of trafficking. In that context, the best way to combat such crime is to focus greater effort on addressing poverty and ensuring stable and sound economic development to create more jobs and opportunities for local people. Human trafficking should be addressed in a comprehensive manner and in conjunction with socioeconomic development.

Another important aspect in the fight against human trafficking is regional cooperation. Global cooperation is important, but regional cooperation is the key, as 75 per cent of all human trafficking cases occurred at the regional level, between neighbouring countries. Adopting regional and subregional anti-trafficking strategies and programmes that incorporate the regional perspective and relevant conditions is commendable. In that context, my delegation has been strongly supportive of the ongoing regional and subregional

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anti-trafficking initiatives, especially within the framework of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), including the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Trafficking in Persons, and in the Greater Mekong Subregion, through the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking. Under that subregional framework, six countries — namely, Cambodia, China, Myanmar, Thailand, Viet Nam and the Lao People's Democratic Republic — work closely together in various areas, in particular prevention, law enforcement and the provision of assistance to victims, to name just a few. At present, we are implementing the third subregional plan of action, which is regularly reviewed.

The Lao Government is committed to combating human trafficking and has undertaken various actions and measures against it over the years. The national supervisory committee on anti- trafficking was set up in 2004. Since then, we have adopted our first national strategy and plan of action on anti- trafficking, which recognizes poverty as one of the main causes of trafficking in persons. The strategy focuses on such areas as prevention, law enforcement, victim assistance and public awareness.

Under the national strategy and plan of action, a number of preventative programmes have been adopted to raise public awareness about human trafficking, and more perpetuators are being sentenced and prosecuted in accordance with the national law. Fourteen cases have been investigated since early this year, involving 20 traffickers and 49 trafficked victims, most of whom were women under the age of 18. Of those cases, nine have been prosecuted.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic is a State party to various international instruments on anti-trafficking, including the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three optional Protocols. As a State party to those conventions, the Lao Government has strengthened its national legislation and regulations, making the punishment of the perpetuators of human trafficking stiffer, including an amendment to the national penal code and the reinforcement of various measures on anti-trafficking.

Let me take this opportunity to extend the Lao Government's gratitude to the international community and the United Nations system, and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in particular, as well as civil society, for their continued support in the fight against human trafficking. Nevertheless, we would like to call for further strengthening of cooperation among all stakeholders to tackle these organized crimes, taking into account the differences and specific needs of each country.

Mr. Nina (Albania): Albania aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the observer of the European Union (see A/67/PV.77). We would like to make the following additional remarks in our national capacity.

Three years ago, we adopted the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, thereby reaffirming our commitment to continue our fight against human trafficking as one of the most shameful manifestations of criminal activity. It is indeed highly regrettable that, as confirmed by the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, trafficking in human beings is still estimated to be the fastest growing transnational activity in the world. It results in gross violations of human rights and of the dignity of the victims. We therefore welcome the convening of this high-level meeting, which gives us an opportunity to review the implementation of the Global Plan of Action.

Albania supported the establishment through the Global Plan of Action of a Voluntary Trust Fund for victims, which provides for small grants to organizations that help survivors of trafficking in persons. As one of the countries in which frontline non-governmental organizations have benefited from the Trust Fund, we note with appreciation the pledges made by Member States during this high-level meeting.

We would also like to thank the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for its comprehensive *Global Report on Trafficking on Persons*, released last December, which was one of the key outcomes of the Global Plan of Action. The report correctly points out several positive aspects of the progress made globally since the entry into force of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, in 2003, such as the criminalization of trafficking by 134 countries. However, we are extremely concerned about the worrying findings of the report concerning the increase in child and girl victims, which we believe constitutes a strong call for urgent action by Member States, the United Nations, regional organizations, civil society and other stakeholders.

The Republic of Albania remains strongly committed to the implementation of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. The Albanian legal system defines trafficking as first and foremost a violation of human rights and an assault to the dignity and integrity of the human being. In line with the Palermo Protocol and the Council of Europe Convention, our approach to trafficking is based on the human rights of the victims and focuses on prevention, the prosecution of perpetrators and the protection of victims. With a view to addressing current trends in human trafficking in a holistic and comprehensive way, we are currently giving further consideration to the improvement of the legal and policy framework.

We are also aware that trafficking in human beings occurs both within and across borders, the latter form indeed including the crossing of many borders to reach the final destination. Trafficking in human beings is often a transnational criminal activity, perpetrated by organized networks that are typically mobile and adapt rapidly to change by redeploying. Collective actions are therefore a must to successfully combat human trafficking, and we remain committed to increasing regional and international cooperation and to strengthening partnerships.

In that context, in 2012, our law enforcements agencies successfully conducted 11 joint operations with agencies from several countries across Europe, all of which resulted in prosecution processes against the perpetrators. Current trends in the Republic of Albania show that there was a decline in 2012 in the number of detected victims of trafficking. However, there has been a significant increase in the number of detected foreign citizens trying to illegally transit the country towards the countries of Western Europe. To tackle the emerging trends, the Office of the Coordinator against Human Trafficking is continuing to train border police personnel, aiming at the specialized and timely detection of any possible victims of trafficking among foreign citizens and the provision of the necessary protection.

In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that every country is affected by human trafficking in different ways. We therefore hope that this meeting will provide for increased cooperation, coordination and sharing of best practices among different actors engaged in combating the gruesome reality of this modern-day slavery.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): My delegation would like to welcome the convening of this high-level meeting, which provides us a good opportunity for Member States, United Nations system organizations and civil society to appraise the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, as well as the Palermo Protocol.

Trafficking in persons is a crime against the dignity of human beings and a serious violation of human rights. Member States have a shared responsibility to eliminate this heinous crime. The 2012 *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, which was prepared by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in accordance with the Global Plan of Action, makes a valuable contribution to enhancing our understanding on this issue. The report shows that approximately 75 per cent of the victims detected globally are women or girls, with another 10 per cent being boys. Those figures illustrate that people who are vulnerable, including women and children, are the main targets of trafficking.

It is important to reach victims in vulnerable circumstances, strengthen their capacity and help them to reintegrate smoothly into society. However, the modes of operation of perpetrators are becoming ever more sophisticated and invisible, making it difficult to detect and rescue victims. For instance, in Japan, it is reported that brokers are trying to have the victims obtain visas through such means as sham marriages.

The fight against trafficking in persons is one of the most important policy areas for the Government of Japan. Therefore, based on the Palermo Protocol, in 2009 the Government established an action plan to combat trafficking in persons in order to further the united efforts of the relevant authorities to tackle this increasingly sophisticated crime. The plan was the result of two consultation sessions with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and ongoing discussions in a working group made up of Government authorities and NGOs. It is a comprehensive plan, covering the "four P's" — prevention, prosecution, protection and partnerships. Its implementation is regularly followed up.

Furthermore, our inter-ministerial task force on combating trafficking in persons recently adopted two sets of guidelines to help implement the action plan effectively. Those on identifying victims familiarize officers with how to deal with trafficking cases and

encourage information-sharing and cooperation among the relevant authorities, including the police, immigration control authorities, women's advisory offices, child guidance centres and labour standards inspection offices. The second set of guidelines, on the protection of victims, draws the relevant officials' attention to the importance of ensuring victims' security, taking their status as victims into account even when their activities while being trafficked constitute a crime, and taking steps to stabilize their legal status, including extending visas and granting special permission to stay in Japan. Those guidelines also highlight the necessity for women's advisory offices to provide victims with support in the form of food, clothing, shelter, interpretation services, counselling and medical care.

In addition to such efforts, in our country we recognize the importance of strong partnerships between States of destination and origin. In order to share information effectively with States of origin, Japan has dispatched a delegation on anti-human-trafficking measures to several countries, and has held joint task-force meetings with one country. There are many issues to be addressed in States of origin and transit, such as capacity-building of law-enforcement officers and the protection, support and reintegration of victims. Japan has therefore contributed to various technical assistance projects, many of them in Southeast Asia, either bilaterally or through the UNODC, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security. In order to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, it is essential to raise awareness among citizens as well as Governments. Japan is committed to tackling this issue, in close cooperation with other Member States, the relevant United Nations entities and civil society.

Mr. Osorio (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to recognize the importance of this meeting, which enables us to assess the progress we have made and the areas where we should be enhancing our efforts to implement the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

This is a modern form of slavery that degrades people, reducing them to chattel to be traded and exploited, and directly harming the human rights and fundamental freedoms of millions of men, women and children. As a form of transnational organized crime, trafficking in persons is a complex crime by which numerous countries can simultaneously become places of origin, transit and destination for victims, making it very difficult to identify the criminal organizations involved and the connections that exist between them. In the light of this issue, and confronted with the necessity of coming up with a concerted international response to a crime that is clearly transnational, the General Assembly adopted resolution 64/293, which approved the Plan of Action and thereby established an effective tool for responding to the various dimensions and features of human trafficking.

In that context, in accordance with the supplementary Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Colombia has made progress in fighting this criminal phenomenon in the areas of prevention, awareness, protection and assistance to victims, as well as in investigation and prosecution. All the Colombian Government's efforts are enshrined in a 2005 law that classifies human trafficking as a crime, creates an inter-agency committee to combat trafficking in persons and promotes the implementation of a national strategy and plan of action against human trafficking, among other activities.

Concerning criminalization, in Colombia trafficking in persons is considered a crime when someone is detained, transported, admitted or harboured, within our national territory or outside it, for the purposes of exploitation. This last element is fundamental to Colombia's comprehensive fight against trafficking in persons, since efforts to derive profit, financially or otherwise, for oneself or for others, by using people for prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, for forced labour or services, slavery or services resembling slavery, servitude, using others for begging, forced marriage, organ removal, sexual tourism and other forms of exploitation are considered crimes in Colombia.

One example of the progress Colombia has made is the high degree of institutionalization and commitment to fighting human trafficking. In 2005, with the creation of our institutional committee for combating trafficking in persons, a guiding and consultative body composed of 14 national entities, with the aim of implementing the comprehensive national strategy for combating trafficking in persons, consisting of four strategic areas — prevention; protection and assistance for victims; international cooperation; and investigation and prosecution.

With regard to prevention, Colombia, together with civil-society, private-sector and international organizations, is conducting awareness-raising campaigns about the crime and its various manifestations, as well as training programmes for prosecutors based on specific protocols for prosecuting cases of human trafficking using simulated trials, aimed at creating and developing practical tools enabling officials to identify and effectively prosecute this crime. For protection and assistance, through which we seek to ensure assistance and comprehensive and qualified protection for victims of human trafficking by developing protection mechanisms within our administrative, investigative and prosecution systems, we have created an anti-trafficking operating centre, designed to coordinate the relevant institutions in providing legal aid and support to victims during the criminal process, with the goal of ensuring their personal security, due process and freedom from discriminatory treatment.

Colombia has strengthened the national bodies responsible for investigating and prosecuting trafficking in persons in order to promote greater efficiency and effectiveness in prosecuting and punishing criminal conduct. That has enabled us to implement a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, whereby just in the past year the national police have succeeded in disbanding more than 10 transnational networks engaged in human trafficking, and the Prosecutor General has initiated 107 investigations that have resulted in 22 convictions.

Finally, in the context of international cooperation, Colombia is making efforts to strengthen mechanisms at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. To that end, Colombia has implemented three strategies. The first is to propose the signing of bilateral memorandums of understanding to combat the trafficking in persons. The second is to promote the conclusion of bilateral plans of action to combat transnational organized crime, which includes the crime of trafficking in persons. And the third is to advocate for meetings of high-level security and justice bodies.

While significant progress has been made to date, the scope and characteristics of the problem illustrate the need to work even more decisively to go beyond an approach focused solely on law enforcement and punishment. As set out in the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, a focus on protection and assistance to victims should guide all the actions of the international community to address this crime.

Colombia believes that it is essential to achieve greater commitment by all States to ensure the protection of victims and prevent their re-victimization. We need to strengthen cooperation mechanisms to enable the voluntary repatriation of trafficking victims and ensure full respect for their rights, security and integrity. Accordingly, we believe that it is necessary to rigorously strengthen and implement labour laws that would require companies to take measures to prevent and combat trafficking in persons in the production and distribution chains.

The global phenomenon of trafficking in persons requires coordinated efforts by all States represented in this Hall today. In that context, the Trafficking in Persons Protocol of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons are crucial frameworks for action to unite our political, technical and operational capacities and to address this phenomenon together.

Mr. Dehghani (Islamic Republic of Iran): Official reports on the increasing numbers with regard to trafficking in persons in many parts of the world, especially children and women, point to an alarming situation that we need to address. To do so effectively, the full cooperation of all members of the international community is required.

Given the transborder nature of the crime, coordination and cooperation at the international level is a sine qua non for serious efforts towards combating it. We believe that the international community should strengthen and enforce effective measures to prevent, combat and eliminate all forms of trafficking in persons. To that end, the demand side for trafficked victims, especially in rich countries, should be addressed and suppressed, and victims, in particular women and children, who are mostly subject to forced labour, sexual or commercial exploitation, violence and sexual abuse, should be protected.

Furthermore, we express our serious concern with the increasing number of reported incidents of trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal, as well as trafficking in organs, tissues and cells.

The Islamic Republic of Iran is of the view that, while combating trafficking in persons, the root

causes of this crime should be also addressed by the international community at the same time. Economic and cultural poverty, unemployment, a lack of socioeconomic opportunities, the many forms of violence, the lack of security, especially in conflict situations, discrimination and marginalization, as well as global financial crises, are some of the contributing factors that make persons vulnerable to trafficking. We therefore encourage Member States, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and other relevant bodies to share information, experiences and good practices on anti-trafficking activities, in particular on combating trafficking in persons. We would like also to emphasize the role of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, including as coordinator of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons.

At the national level, article 156 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran has established crime prevention as a responsibility of the country's judiciary branch. Furthermore, nine years ago, our Parliament passed legislation entitled the Combating Human Trafficking Law. The legislation consists of eight articles that criminalize and penalize all forms of human trafficking. Articles 4 and 7 of the law stipulate that any Iranian individual, whether official or private, living inside or outside the country, who commits human trafficking will be tried, prosecuted and punished by a competent court. As the website of the Ministry of the Interior of the Islamic Republic of Iran indicates, 46 human trafficking gangs were dismantled by our special police force in recent months, with 147 persons arrested during anti-trafficking operations.

With regard to protection, the State welfare organization and the country's municipalities address the socioeconomic and psychological needs of the victims of trafficking in persons.

As both a transit and destination country for drug trafficking, the Islamic Republic of Iran has always been active in combating drug trafficking, particularly across its borders. As human trafficking networks form nexuses with other criminal activities ranging from money laundering to prostitution, child pornography, slavery and drug trafficking , it is important that the international community consider the possible links among those criminal activities and be prepared to combat them with vigour when necessary.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the commitment of my Government to combating trafficking in persons, as well as its readiness to cooperate with other stakeholders in that regard.

Mr. Ntwaagae (Botswana): Allow me to join other delegations in thanking the President for convening this high-level meeting. Botswana welcomes the opportunity afforded by this meeting to contribute to the review of the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

We would like to thank the Secretary-General, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other speakers for their inspiring opening statements (see A/67/PV.77). We would also like to thank United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for the 2012 *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, which forms the basis for our discussions today.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire on behalf of the African Group (see A/67/PV.77).

Botswana attaches great importance to the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which the General Assembly adopted in July 2010. Although not an end in itself, the Plan of Action is significant in that it provides comprehensive and all-encompassing measures aimed at addressing human trafficking. It therefore contributes to the implementation of other related international instruments on trafficking in persons. While highlighting key aspects of trafficking, the Plan also places a high premium on a human-rights based and victim-centred approach to addressing the problem.

Since the adoption of the Global Plan of Action, almost three years ago, we recognize the significant progress that has been made by the United Nations to achieve greater coordination in and support for national efforts to combat trafficking in persons. We should therefore not allow the momentum that has been generated up to this point through the adoption of that historic Plan of Action to peter out.

My delegation notes with satisfaction the strong focus on trafficking maintained by other parts of the United Nations system, including the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms. In that regard, we welcome the work of the relevant treaty bodies and Special Rapporteurs as they continue to highlight the issue in

their concluding observations and recommendations in the reports submitted by States parties.

We are also encouraged by the efforts and measures taken by many countries to combat trafficking, including the development and implementation of comprehensive national anti-trafficking laws, action plans and enhanced cooperation at the bilateral, regional and international levels. All those efforts are indicative of our resolve and commitment to collective action in that regard.

Trafficking in persons has become a major social and economic phenomenon in all countries. Despite its prominence on the international agenda and the efforts made to raise public awareness about the problem, many countries, including my own, remain fertile ground for traffickers who capitalize on vulnerabilities created by poverty, inequality, unemployment and a general lack of opportunities for many in our populations, especially women, who constitute the majority of the poor in most societies.

The pattern of trafficking in persons observed in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region indicates that almost all SADC countries are source countries, while others are transit and destination countries. Due to its location and proximity to neighbouring countries, Botswana has been used as a trafficking route and hub for traffickers. The prevailing trend in cross-border trafficking in the region shows that women and girls constitute the majority of those trafficked for purposes of sexual exploitation.

Botswana and other countries in the SADC region recognize the existence of the problem of trafficking in persons and the need to effectively address it, as evidenced by the efforts that individual Member States are actively pursuing. To that end, there is a growing awareness of the need for well-coordinated joint initiatives at the regional and national levels designed to develop harmonized legislation and policies to address the menace. In that regard, our efforts as a country continue to be guided by regional instruments such as the 10-year SADC Strategic Plan of Action on Combating Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women And Children. We are currently in the process of drafting anti-human-trafficking legislation in Botswana. Various stakeholders in our country continue to work together to address issues related to trafficking.

Although the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* indicates that reasonable progress has been made in the fight against trafficking, we remain concerned about the persistence and prevalence of trafficking in persons, especially women and girls. The worrying trend of an increase in child victims, and the increase in the number of girl victims in particular, is a matter of grave concern to my delegation. I therefore wish to stress the importance of taking effective action against trafficking in women and girls, lest those responsible for the heinous crime that is trafficking continue to act with impunity.

While we acknowledge that a lack of specific legislation criminalizing trafficking in persons undermines all ongoing efforts by Governments, we also note that the enforcement of anti-trafficking laws continues to pose a challenge for many States, as demonstrated by the low number of prosecutions where such laws exist. In that regard, Botswana strongly shares the view that priority should continue to be accorded to strengthening national efforts to prosecute and punish perpetrators and, most important, build the capacity of States, specifically the capacity of institutions and professionals involved in the response to trafficking in persons.

In view of the great importance that Botswana attaches to the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, my delegation fully supports the calls for strengthening the capacity of that entity in order to assist Member States in implementing all four of the pillars in the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and other existing related international instruments.

Trafficking in persons needs to be viewed as a shared responsibility among States. We therefore believe that the international community has the tools to combat that challenge, which is by no means an insurmountable problem. What is needed is to stand united for a common purpose for the common good of humankind. We also recognize the importance of the need for a continuous evaluation and monitoring of our efforts and measures undertaken at all levels in order to assess their effectiveness in combating trafficking.

I wish to conclude by emphasizing the need for greater political will and commitment to fight the crime of trafficking in persons. In that regard, I reaffirm Botswana's commitment to the effective implementation of the Global Plan of Action and other relevant regional and international instruments aimed at combating trafficking in persons.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): Allow me, at the outset, to express our appreciation to the President of the General Assembly and the facilitators — the Permanent Representative of Austria and the Permanent Representative of Cape Verde — for their work in preparing this high-level meeting. My delegation believes that the convening of this meeting is timely and much needed, given that human trafficking continues to be a widespread crime that affects many Member States.

Together with the rest of the international community, Malaysia condemns in the strongest possible terms the heinous crimes of trafficking in persons. We are seriously committed and are making every effort within our means to address and eventually eradicate the problem.

Malaysia attaches great importance to the implementation of the landmark Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, adopted in resolution 64/293 in 2010. Through the Plan, Governments have agreed to take concrete action to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, protect and assist victims, prosecute related crimes and strengthen partnerships among governmental institutions and all the different stakeholders.

For our part, Malaysia enacted the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act in 2007, which was later amended to become the Anti-Trafficking in Persons (Amendment) Act of 2010. Amendments were necessary to close loopholes and expand the scope of the law to address the problem of smuggling of migrants. The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2007 allowed for the establishment of what has become, since the Anti-Trafficking in Persons (Amendment) Act 2010, the Council for Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants. The Council is responsible for the formulation of policies and the implementation of the 2010 national action plan to combat trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants.

Despite our comprehensive approach to the problem, we are faced with a multitude of challenges. As we have become both a destination country and a transit country, and even, to a lesser extent, a country of origin, we have been put in an unenviable position of having to examine the problem from a bird-eye's view. Unenviable though it may be, it does have its advantages in that it has allowed us to appreciate the enormity of the challenge that lies before us. Through our experience, we have learned that cooperation and coordination with neighbouring countries is essential in our common efforts to combat the ugly scourge of trafficking in persons.

Malaysia therefore welcomes the launching of the 2012 *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, prepared pursuant to the resolution 64/293. The report provides us with comprehensive and reliable data on the offenders, the victims and the trafficking flows throughout regions in order to combat this ugly scourge more effectively. We are pleased to note that the report is the first of its kind and sheds light on patterns and flows of trafficking in persons.

My delegation remains seriously concerned that women account for almost 60 per cent of all trafficked victims detected globally, followed by children, at 27 per cent. While the widespread ratification of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children is viewed as a success story, we need to do more. Valuable and all-encompassing though the Protocol may be, without a doubt the main challenge that lies before States parties is to implementation the provisions contained therein.

In conclusion, Malaysia believes that the international community must be cautious in dealing with the issue so as not to divert resources and attention from addressing the underlying causes of human trafficking and people smuggling. In that regard, we cannot emphasize enough the importance of addressing the supply element in countries of origin, in particular contributing factors such as poverty, underdevelopment and marginalization.

Mr. Chua (Singapore): Trafficking in persons is a flagrant violation of human dignity and a heinous and shameful crime. Singapore strongly condemns it. We are fully committed to implementing the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

As a regional transport hub, Singapore is unfortunately susceptible to being used by trafficking syndicates. That has further strengthened our resolve to combat trafficking in persons. Our efforts are holistic and aligned with the four elements covered under the Global Plan of Action, which include the prevention of trafficking in persons, the protection of victims, the prosecution of offenders and the strengthening of partnerships with foreign Governments, civil society and other stakeholders. Singapore has put in place

a national plan of action to map out our strategies to counter trafficking.

Our prevention efforts are underpinned by strong partnerships with stakeholders within and beyond our borders. We have strengthened the capacity of our law enforcement and labour officers to deal with trafficking cases. We have also deployed police liaison officers in a few neighbouring countries to serve as contact points for cases of transnational crime, including trafficking in persons. Our authorities hold pre-departure briefings and roadshows in selected countries to educate foreign workers on their employment rights and avenues for assistance. Regular dialogues on labour isues are also held with embassies based in Singapore.

We recognize the expertise of, and value the important role played by, civil society organizations in the fight against trafficking. The relevant Singapore authorities engage civil society regularly in the development of policy initiatives. They have a good working relationship with civil society in the referral of trafficking cases and the provision of services to trafficked victims.

Although Singapore is not yet party to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, we have adopted the Protocol's definition of trafficking in persons for our operational purposes. The Singapore Government is currently reviewing our existing laws and exploring the feasibility of establishing separate legislation. Those efforts are complemented by ongoing work to enact an organized crime act that would target organized criminal groups and criminal activities.

In line with our support for the Global Plan of Action, Singapore is working with member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in considering the development of a regional plan of action to combat trafficking in persons and an ASEAN convention on trafficking in persons. The proposed regional plan of action will be aligned with, and support the implementation of, the Global Plan of Action. Such regional instruments will focus on law enforcement cooperation, victim care and protection initiatives. They are envisaged to be a comprehensive response to the trafficking problem that will also take into account local culture and Government and different legal systems.

Singapore reiterates our firm commitment to combat trafficking in persons. We remain vigilant and will continue to improve our policy measures and do our part in tackling this scourge.

Mr. Sul Kyung-hoon (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Vuk Jeremić, His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Executive Director of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Mr. Yury Fedotov, for their insightful opening remarks. My appreciation also goes to the United Nations Goodwill Ambassador for the Global Fight against Human Trafficking, Ms. Mira Sorvino, and the President of Vital Voices Global Partnership, Ms. Alyse Nelson, for their statements at the opening plenary meeting (see A/67/PV.77). My delegation would also like to express its gratitude to the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Cape Verde for their efforts in preparing this high-level meeting.

Human trafficking is a heinous criminal activity that constitutes a serious threat to human dignity, human rights and development. It ruthlessly exploits the most vulnerable groups, in particular women and children. While strong and consistent condemnation by the international community has led to significant normative progress to end this egregious crime, human trafficking still remains a daunting challenge in many parts of the world.

Against that backdrop, the adoption of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons in 2010 was a significant milestone not only in reaffirming the commitments of the international community to end human trafficking, but also in translating our will into concrete action on the ground. This high-level meeting provides a timely opportunity to assess the progress achieved and to identify remaining challenges in the implementation of this landmark Plan of Action. The Plan of Action underlines four areas, namely, prevention, protection, prosecution and partnershi In that regard, I would like to focus on the following points in the implementation of the Action Plan.

First, the fight against impunity is key to combating crimes of human trafficking. In that regard, the low conviction rate for human trafficking indicated in the UNODC 2012 *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* is a cause for disappointment. Without ensuring accountability for trafficking crimes, we can never expect to address this issue fundamentally. Further efforts need to be made towards enacting and enforcing

legislation, as well as investigating, prosecuting and punishing those responsible for such criminal activities.

As for the Republic of Korea, we recently amended the criminal act to introduce a new provision that deals with human trafficking comprehensively. Even before that amendment, all types of exploitation were punishable before the law. With the new amendment, however, we have become better equipped with a stronger legal basis for the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking. In follow-up to that amendment, we are planning to ratify the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.

Secondly, given the transnational nature of human trafficking, we need to further promote effective cooperation and coordination among countries, United Nations agencies and other international organizations. My delegation commends the important role of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons in fostering coordination and cooperation in the global fight against trafficking in persons. We also welcome the Group's plan to publish a series of issue papers this year.

For our part, we have been actively engaged in regional cooperation initiatives, such as the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime. We have also strengthened our participation in international legal frameworks in the field of law enforcement, technical assistance and capacity-building. At present, we have concluded extradition treaties with 77 countries and have signed treaties on mutual legal assistance with 68 countries.

We also need to further strengthen the protection of victims of trafficking and the provision of assistance to them. In that regard, we commend the significant work of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. The Fund, created through the adoption of the Action Plan, has been supporting organizations around the world in providing concrete assistance to the victims of trafficking. We also believe that the biennial *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, released by the UNODC, is contributing to better identifying victims and facilitating assistance to them.

The Korean Government has been providing protection and assistance to the victims of trafficking, including services for their physical, psychological and social recovery and rehabilitation, in close cooperation with non-governmental organizations and civil society. In that area, we are planning to launch a new cooperation initiative this year with developing countries.

The crimes of human trafficking are often described as unthinkable and unspeakable. My delegation hopes that this high-level meeting will serve as a significant occasion to show our unwavering determination to end human trafficking with one voice. The Korean Government reaffirms its commitment to the global efforts to combat trafficking in persons.

Mr. Le Hoai Trung (Viet Nam): The information available to us presents a highly troubling situation. The consequences for the world, countries, communities and people, including women and children, are certainly very broad and deep. While we note the progress achieved through our efforts, the challenges are enormous, complex and multifaceted. In that context, the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, adopted by Member States in 2010, is a crucial milestone.

Combating human trafficking vis-à-vis a comprehensive approach has consistently been a priority of the Government of Viet Nam and part of our policy. Our experience shows that the socioeconomic root causes must always be dealt with in parallel with crime-fighting efforts. Crime prevention and victim assistance must be essential components.

The strong political commitment of Viet Nam to address the problem of human trafficking is reflected in the large number of important laws, policies, programmes and plans of action we have adopted in many areas, in accordance with the four main pillars of the Global Plan of Action, namely, prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership. The most recent was the law adopted by the National Assembly of Viet Nam in 2011 on preventing and combating human trafficking. Among other things, the law expands the definition of human trafficking and provides for various measures and obligations on the part of the State, organizations and individuals.

The Government's national action plan against trafficking in persons for the period from 2011 to 2015 aims at protecting all Vietnamese citizens and foreigners living in Viet Nam from human trafficking. It deals with events in Viet Nam and across the Vietnamese border, in cooperation with other countries and international

organizations. The plan consists of five major projects on information and awareness-raising campaigns, capacity-building for multidisciplinary teams, victim protection and assistance, strengthening the legal system, monitoring the implementation of laws and policies, and strengthening international cooperation in combating human trafficking.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Viet Nam has one of the highest trafficker conviction rates in the world. Currently, in implementing the law against human trafficking, the People's Supreme Procuracy, in cooperation with the relevant ministries and Government agencies, is drafting an inter-agency circular to detail guidance on crimes related to human trafficking and raise the penalties for such crimes. The mass media in Viet Nam play a significant role in mobilizing public support and exposing crimes.

Viet Nam has ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and strictly complies with its obligations under those instruments. Viet Nam has bilateral agreements and has undertaken cooperative activities with all neighbouring and regional countries to prevent and fight human trafficking. In that regard, we commend the UNODC in Viet Nam for its contribution to the signing of a number of memorandums of understanding on cooperation to fight human trafficking and the trafficking in persons for the purposes of labour, as well as on mutual legal assistance in the region.

Viet Nam has also been participating in many other regional and international initiatives and processes on migration in general and on the prevention of illegal migration and human trafficking in particular, including the process of the Inter-governmental Asia-Pacific Consultations on Refugees, Displaced Persons and Migrants, the Asia–European Union Dialogue on Labour Migration, the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking and the Interparliamentary Organization Forum on Legal Cooperation to Combat Human Trafficking of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The Government and various Vietnamese organizations have worked effectively with the UNODC and many other international governmental and non-governmental organizations in that regard. Experience also shows that abuse or politicization by any organization or individual for their selfish interests of issues related to human trafficking hinders cooperation, therefore in effect hampering the fight against human trafficking.

Human trafficking is deeply rooted in vulnerability to poverty, gender inequality and violence against women, the lack of opportunities and employment and the lack of access to education and discrimination. In that connection, the Government has put in place various measures to address economic and social inequalities by adopting national action plans, strategies and projects in a number of areas of socioeconomic life. Other measures at the local level include income-generating groups, vocational training, job placement and capital provision.

Viet Nam would like to reiterate its commitment to the fight against human trafficking and looks forward to continuing to cooperate with the international community to that end. We sincerely hope that this meeting will significantly add to the common efforts to fight human trafficking.

Mr. Al-Mesallam (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, please allow me to thank the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Vuk Jeremić, for having convened this meeting to evaluate the progress achieved in the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. This is a unique and important opportunity for all Member States to evaluate the advances made and identify the areas that need to be addressed.

The crime of trafficking in persons is a serious violation of fundamental human rights. Such violations of human rights and other types violations cannot be tolerated. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the efforts made by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to combat trafficking in persons at the international level. We particularly welcome the 2012 UNODC *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, which allows for an unprecedented understanding of information on the measures undertaken at the international level to end the phenomenon of human trafficking. The report also touches on the activities aimed at giving Member States support in eliminating the scourge and in implementing protocols and conventions in that area.

The crime of trafficking in persons holds third place on the list of the most profitable international crimes,

after illicit trafficking in weapons and illicit trafficking in drugs. According to the UNODC report, trafficking in children, especially girls, is a phenomenon that continues to grow; it now represents 27 per cent of the victims identified. Clearly, the issue of trafficking in persons is closely linked to poverty, since the victims of trafficking come from the poorest, most vulnerable and marginalized segments of society, namely, women and children. The protection of victims is therefore related to the empowerment of those social groups through meeting their basic needs and adopting policies and programmes aimed at eliminating unemployment, inequality and poverty.

The high-level participation at today's meeting reflects the importance of advancing the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Member States have reaffirmed their commitment to eliminating this heinous crime. as well as their determination to prevent and combat it, to protect victims and to improve partnerships in that regard.

We in Qatar pay special attention to the Global Plan of Action. In the context of the Plan, we have been able to translate our political will into concrete innovative measures aimed at halting the phenomenon of human trafficking. In 2011, we adopted a law to combat trafficking in persons, which ascribes criminal liability to all forms of trafficking in persons. The State of Qatar also participates actively in international and regional efforts to eliminate trafficking in persons. We respect and apply the human values and principles that are enshrined in our Constitution and the values associated with respect for human rights, which is reflected in my country's foreign and domestic policies.

For example, the State of Qatar sponsored the Arab Initiative for Building National Capacities for Combating Human Trafficking in Arab countries, in partnership with the Qatar Foundation for Combating Human Trafficking, the UNODC and the League of Arab States. Following up on the Arab Initiative, under the patronage of Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser al Missned, the wife of the Emir of Qatar, the third Doha Forum on Combating Trafficking in Persons was organized in 2013, under the slogan, "Contemporary Trends in Combating Human Trafficking". The objective of the Forum was to shed light on contemporary trends and mechanisms in place in combating trafficking in persons and to support national capacities in the framework of the Arab Initiative.

Qatar is a member of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking. In addition, we contribute to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking, which clearly shows the importance that Qatar places on the efforts to protect victims.

The crime of trafficking in persons in all its forms and manifestations is a flagrant violation of human rights and the values enshrined in our Islamic religion and in all religions, national constitutions and international instruments. From this rostrum, I would like to reaffirm that Qatar believes that all actions undertaken in that area in our country are rooted in our absolute belief that preserving human dignity is of crucial importance. Those efforts are also an expression of our sense of social and humanitarian responsibility, through which we reinforce our religious values, our support for human rights and our respect for the international instruments to which we have acceded.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Government of Spain is very pleased with the convening of this high-level meeting, which affords us an opportunity to share our experiences in the field of combating human trafficking and to coordinate strategies to eradicate that scourge.

In the past few years, Spain has experienced an unprecedented opening that has enabled our country to welcome 6 million migrants in the past decade alone. That has undoubtedly generated great benefits, but it has also developed human trafficking to a degree previously unknown to us, forcing us to face that sad reality.

The situation has led Spain to become fully aware of that global challenge and to design a multidisciplinary strategy focused on victims and their rights, in coordination with all the relevant ministries and competent authorities to confront the problem more efficiently.

Human trafficking is the contemporary manifestation of slavery. It implies a clear infringement of human rights and violates people's dignity, integrity, security and freedom, especially that of women and children, who represent the most vulnerable groups. Spain therefore considers it essential to apply a human rights approach when combating human trafficking. We should also keep in mind that, when fighting human trafficking for sexual exploitation, we are also fighting gender-based violence, which is one of the

most extreme forms of discrimination. In that respect, Spain supports an approach that identifies a clear link between discrimination, gender-based violence and trafficking in persons. We should also bear in mind that human trafficking is also an expression of transnational organized crime, which generates profits in the billions of euros internationally. The phenomenon is extremely serious and can only be successfully addressed through close and effective international cooperation in the areas of security among the countries of origin, transit and destination.

It is therefore crucial to work in the countries of origin in order to develop collaborative mechanisms, tools and procedures to detect and prevent the potential for trafficking in victims from some countries to others. Spain urges that both international organizations and Member States give preferential attention to victims when designing their strategies and actions to combat human trafficking. Strategies should focus on providing victims with appropriate protection and attention, as set forth in the conclusions of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which was held in New York from 4 to 15 March.

In that respect, it is essential that the fight against human trafficking be addressed from a multidisciplinary perspective, so that preventive or penal responses to such crimes are accompanied by the firm commitment of States to ensure the full protection of victims' rights, with special attention being given to aspects related to legal procedures, the necessity of guaranteeing specialized legal assistance, and administrative procedures that could affect them. In that regard, as indicated in the *Recommended Principles and Guidelines on Human Rights and Human Trafficking* of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights,

> "This is the only way to retain a focus on the trafficked persons to ensure that trafficking is not simply reduced to a problem of migration, a problem of public order or a problem of organized crime."

With the creation of its comprehensive plan to combat trafficking for sexual exploitation, Spain has achieved significant progress both internationally and domestically. At the international level, Spain subscribes to all the relevant instruments in the fight against human trafficking, including the Trafficking in Persons Protocol and the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, and has ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. In addition, we are actively working towards increasingly close and effective international cooperation, with the goal of achieving a united front that will enable us to completely eradicate this form of modern-day slavery.

On the domestic level, Spain has adapted its legislation to comply with its international commitments, and has strengthened its protection capacity with the establishment of a protection framework protocol for victims of human trafficking. We have also set up a data management system that collects comprehensive information related to prevention activities and the work done in combating human trafficking by Spanish security forces. Finally, we have developed public awareness drives such as the Blue Heart campaign, and joined other initiatives such as the International Day against Human Trafficking on 23 September and the European Day against Human Trafficking on 18 October.

Over the course of this year, Spain is evaluating its national human-trafficking plan for 2009-2012 and is planning to formulate a comprehensive new instrument dealing with the fight against human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. We are also drafting a new law that will establish a legal status for victims. And we will continue to promote the integration of victims into society and the job market. We also hope to increase funding for the mechanisms that aid victims.

Spain is firmly committed to the fight against human trafficking. The current statistics and reports on human trafficking in my country, such as those most recently published by our ombudsman's office, not only show that Spain has effective systems for identifying victims and combating trafficking but also demonstrate the Spanish authorities' transparency and level of cooperation with the relevant international organizations and institutions in fighting human trafficking.

The observer of the European Union has made a statement (see A/67/PV.77) that sets out the importance that its member States attach to this issue and that explains the European Union's efforts to combat it, which Spain has played a significant role in formulating.

Mr. León González (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba welcomes this meeting of the General Assembly and the progress made in discussions within the United Nations

on the international problem of human trafficking. We commend the work done by the facilitators, the Ambassadors of Cape Verde and Portugal, and their conduct of the consultations leading up to this meeting. We would also like to thank the delegation of Belarus for its active efforts to address this important subject.

In spite of the efforts of States, civil society and the international community as a whole, the manifestations of trafficking in persons continue to grow and diversify. This terrible crime affects millions of people around the world, mainly women and children. Human trafficking is a modern and abhorrent form of slavery. It reduces human beings to the status of chattel or merchandise that can be traded and transported within or outside countries; then, when they reach their final destinations, they are exploited and forced to work against their will, their freedom to move and communicate controlled. Trafficking violates the most basic human rights. It is a complex phenomenon, and the fight against it transcends national boundaries and demands that we strengthen international cooperation and coordination at every level in order to prevent and eradicate it.

The United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, adopted by the General Assembly in 2010, is proof of the importance of tackling the problem of human trafficking through open, transparent and inclusive multilateral mechanisms, where every State has the opportunity to contribute on an equal level.

Transnational organized crime has no active presence in Cuba. Because of that, there is virtually no human trafficking, which has strong ties to such crime. Cuba therefore does not qualify as a country of origin, transit or destination for such activity. Despite the low incidence of such crime, the Government of the Republic of Cuba attaches great importance to combating trafficking in persons in all its manifestations. Traffickking is against the law in Cuba, according to the penal code. In Cuba, the definition of trafficking in persons includes promoting, organizing or inciting the entry into or exit from the country of people for the purposes of prostitution or any other form of carnal trade. Our legislation punishes perpetrators more severely in cases where the victims are children. We are currently working on refining the legal definitions of categories such as exploitation, means and forced labour, generally speaking using the definitions given in the international agreements and treaties to which Cuba is party.

Cuba firmly rejects any lists and assessments concerning human trafficking in developing countries that any State, however powerful, may establish unilaterally, selectively and for political motives. Such a practice is contrary to the principle of international cooperation and, furthermore, clearly incompatible with the goals of the Global Plan of Action. Such a selective and discriminatory practice should immediately halted.

To achieve progress and effectiveness in the international fight against human trafficking, we must put an end to all selective or discriminatory practices and double standards in dealing with this issue. Only through cooperation and a coordination of efforts among all States will real progress be made in the prevention and elimination of this crime.

Mrs. Zarrouk Boumiza (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): First of all, allow me to welcome the convening of this high-level meeting on a subject as important as that of human trafficking. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his report entitled "Trafficking in women and girls" (A/67/170), as well as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for its continuous efforts to fight this scourge.

Tunisia fully endorses the statement made by the representative of Côte d'Ivoire on behalf of the African Group (see A/67/PV.77).

Recognized as a modern form of slavery, human trafficking is a serious violation of human rights and a crime against both the individual and the State that must be suppressed and punished by the law. This increasingly globalized scourge requires increased attention from the international community, which is called on today to act in a collective manner to provide appropriate solutions to this pressing problem.

We are all affected to varying degrees by this phenomenon, which takes on many different forms and varies from one country to another. Some countries suffer from slavery or forced marriage, while others suffer from sex trafficking, organ harvesting or the trafficking of illegal immigrants. Collective action is still the best way to combat trafficking in persons and avoid its harmful socioeconomic effects and negative impact on people's security and dignity.

Tunisia abolished slavery in January 1846 by adopting a law that states that every person is free, whatever their colour or gender, and that any person

violating that supreme decision would be subject to criminal sanctions. While trafficking in persons has not yet reached the level of scourge in Tunisia, my country is determined to combat the phenomenon, both at its roots and in its manifestations.

In that regard, Tunisia has ratified and acceded to several international instruments on trafficking in persons, including the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and, recently, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the Convention.

In that process, legislative and institutional measures aimed at preventing and suppressing the trafficking and exploitation through prostitution of women and girls, as well as social integration for prostitutes ,were also taken. Several legal mechanisms in support of State initiatives to eradicate the phenomenon of human trafficking were implemented, such as the code for the protection of the child, which protects girls from all forms of trafficking, and the penal code to protect women and girls from all forms of trafficking by criminalizing the abduction of a person by fraud, violence or threats, child abandonment, subjection of children to prostitution, incitement to immorality or incitement to corruption and sexual harassment.

It should also be noted that my country, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration, recently initiated a study to identify cases of trafficking in persons and the various facets of such trafficking in Tunisia. A national commission was established, including key stakeholders, and a bill to prohibit the trafficking in persons has been developed and presented to the National Constituent Assembly. That bill on human trafficking was prepared in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior and in consultation with the relevant ministries and with the participation of civil society. It provides for, inter alia, the establishment of national structures that will deal with problems related to this topic. It is also aimed at protecting victims, who are usually women and children, and identifying the perpetrators.

However, my country remains fully convinced that in order to fight the scourge of trafficking in persons it is not enough to establish a comprehensive tool to prevent this crime, protect victims of trafficking and prosecute its perpetrators. We must also address the factors that fuel trafficking, including socioeconomic vulnerability. The fight against poverty, unemployment, discrimination, ignorance and illiteracy and efforts aimed at reducing disparities within States and between them are likely to ensure a decent and dignified life for all vulnerable groups in society.

Illegal or irregular migrants constitute one of the vulnerable groups directly exposed to the phenomenon of trafficking in persons. My country believes that this group deserves greater attention from the international community. In that respect, we urge all Member States to cooperate more closely in order to identify appropriate solutions to the phenomenon of illegal immigration. Such solutions must be based on the principle of respect for human rights and human dignity and on equal and inclusive development.

Tunisia strongly condemns this scourge and urges Member States to redouble their efforts to provide adequate and effective responses to the factors that fuel human trafficking. We reiterate our commitment to actively contribute to international efforts to put an end to this phenomenon, which threatens all of humankind.

The Acting President: I would like to remind representatives that we still have 22 speakers on the list, in addition to the Chairs of two panels, who will deliver summaries. In order to enable the Assembly to complete this high-level meeting, delegations are kindly asked to limit their statements to under five minutes.

Mr. Adoumasse (Benin) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to welcome the holding of this high-level meeting on human trafficking to review the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which was adopted in July 2010, as well as to identify the best ways to strengthen coordination for a more effective fight against this scourge.

Benin aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Côte d'Ivoire on behalf of the African Group (see A/67/PV.77).

Human trafficking, in particular in women and children, constitutes a serious threat to human dignity, human rights and development. The United Nations and the international community as a whole have quite rightly chosen to deal with this issue at the highest level, as seen in the many resolutions and international commitments that contain extremely useful recommendations for combatting this threat. The adoption of the 2005 World Summit Outcome

(resolution 60/1) highlighted the fact that human trafficking remained a serious problem for humankind and that its solution required concerted international work. To that end, unstinting efforts have been undertaken to update and implement effective measures aimed at combatting and eliminating human trafficking in all its forms. Resolution 55/25, of 15 November 2000, through which the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, and the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons of 2010 constitute major steps taken in that respect. These are tools that have allowed States to incorporate the fight against human trafficking and exploitation into their national policies and to make it, to varying degrees, a priority.

Poverty, unemployment, the lack of socioeconomic opportunities, sexual violence, discrimination, marginalization and social exclusion are some of the factors that expose people to the threat of trafficking. The most vulnerable social groups, because of poverty and unemployment, represent high-risk areas on which the efforts to fight that scourge must be focused. That fight cannot succeed without a national action plan in each country and genuine coordination of the plans at the subregional and regional levels.

The Government of Benin has raised the issue of combatting human trafficking to one of its top priorities. That commitment resulted in the adoption, on 5 April 2006, of Act 2006/04, on the transport of minors and combating trafficking in children in our country, together with the development of its implementation decrees.

Benin has also developed a national policy and strategy document on social protection for the period 2004-2013, which targets those requiring more sustained attention, in particular abandoned children, street children and working children, and children not in school. That legal and normative instrument has been strengthened by the adoption of a code on persons and the family and the establishment of a brigade for the protection of minors under the Ministry of the Interior. Efforts are under way to give Benin a code for children to better establish the legal norms for the protection and promotion of children's development.

In addition to the African Union Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Benin has implemented the Multilateral Cooperation Agreement to Combat Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, in West and Central Africa, adopted in Abuja on 6 July 2006. This inter-regional Agreement is a veritable framework for judicial cooperation to effectively and comprehensively combat this scourge.

The progress made cannot overshadow the many challenges that remain in effectively combatting this phenomenon without boundaries. Benin therefore believes that sharper focus should be placed on the protection of and assistance to victims of trafficking in persons by strengthening the capacities of the of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. We also believe it is necessary to adopt and implement, at the national, subregional and regional levels, comprehensive policies and programmes aimed at preventing all forms of human trafficking. Such policies and programmes must be consistent with the relevant guidelines in migration, education, employment, gender equality, women's empowerment and crime prevention.

Benin believes that prevention must be a fundamental pillar of the global strategy against trafficking in persons. That means that we must encourage sustainable development to better address the social, economic, cultural and economic factors that put people at risk of trafficking.

Ms. Powell-Britton (Jamaica): Jamaica welcomes the convening of this high-level meeting and expresses its gratitude to the President of the General Assembly and the representatives of Cape Verde and Austria for their efforts to make the meeting a reality.

It has been three years since the adoption of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. In that regard, Jamaica believes that this is an opportune time to assess what has been done on the global level to rid the international community of the heinous crime of human trafficking.

The Government of Jamaica accords the highest level of political commitment to the fight against human trafficking and unequivocally denounces the scourge of trafficking in human beings. Jamaica reaffirms its determination to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, protect and assist victims, prosecute crimes of trafficking in persons and strengthen our local, regional

and international partnerships against trafficking in persons.

In keeping with the Global Plan of Action, as well as a host of international instruments, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, Jamaica has continued to develop and strengthen its domestic, legislative and institutional framework. The overarching legislation specific to prosecuting, suppressing and preventing the trafficking in persons in Jamaica is the Trafficking in Persons Prevention, Suppression and Punishment Act of 2007. The Act sets out provisions for giving effect to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons by inter alia outlining the offence of trafficking in persons, restitution, the protection of victims, proceedings and penalties.

Although regarded as fully compliant and consistent with international and United Nations standards set by the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, over the years we have identified where the Act may be strengthened to more effectively combat trafficking in persons. As a result, Jamaica has reviewed the Act and a draft bill has been finalized and is now to be approved by the Cabinet for introduction in the Parliament. Such amendments to the Act include expanding the definition of exploitation to include debt bondage, increasing penalties from 10 years to 20 years; providing for the new offence of conspiracy, punishable by imprisonment of up to 20 years or by both a fine and imprisonment; outlining aggravating circumstances that courts may take into account in sentences and the granting of restitution to victims within the same proceedings in which the person was convicted.

The combat of trafficking in persons in Jamaica has been accorded the highest level of institutional support through the establishment of an interministerial subcommittee of the Cabinet to monitor and make recommendations on Jamaica's effort to fight trafficking in persons. A national task force against trafficking in persons was established to coordinate our response. The composition of the task force is equally reflective of the level of importance that Jamaica attaches to the issue and the holistic approach it has adopted, and spans a gamut of institutions and organizations in the fight against trafficking. The task force includes representatives from all the relevant local stakeholders — from the Government, law enforcement, the justice sector and civil society.

In spite of its constraints, Jamaica has made significant strides in addressing the issue of human trafficking. Jamaica has approved a national plan of action to combat trafficking in persons for the period 2012-2015, which adopts the guiding principles of the Global Plan of Action. A secretariat was established within the Ministry of Justice to support and monitor the implementation of the action plan. On the ground, since the adoption of the 2012 national plan of action, we have undertaken concrete action, including the establishment of a shelter for victims, conducting 255 raids, detecting 6 cases and rescuing 39 victims. We have redoubled our efforts in preventing and identifying trafficking in persons by expanding outreach, sensitization and training. More than 50 lectures, reaching more than 2,000 individuals, have been conducted by the Jamaica constabulary force alone. All the other relevant institutions have also mainstreamed trafficking in persons awareness in their public awareness campaigns. We have launched social media pages, conducted island-wide tours and staged outdoor and school broadcasts, reaching approximately 5,000 individuals at the location.

The Government is also presently engaged in a series of regional coordination meetings, supported by the International Organization for Migration, with other Caribbean territories to enhance the coordination of our response. Nationally, a memorandum of understanding is currently being developed to establish a standard protocol to govern data collection and information-sharing relating to trafficking in persons, victims and offenders.

Jamaica believes that the commendable work being done at the national level must be adequately supported by efforts at the international level, as no country or region has remained untouched by this gross indifference to human life. It is in that regard that Jamaica expresses its gratitude to its international partners for the support given in building capacity to combat this phenomenon. We hope that such fruitful collaboration will continue, as there is still so much work to be done. In that regard, I wish to quote our Prime Minister:

> "Our ancestors fought for our freedom. It is disgraceful that at this juncture of world history

we should see the emergence of a form of modern-day slavery that allows women, girls and boys to be traded as chattel and treated as subhuman."

Jamaica will never again allow any form of slavery or subjugation to pervade our society. Firm in its resolve for the dignity of our people, the international community can rest assure that Jamaica will continue to take bold actions in combatting this heinous activity.

Mr. Šćepanović (Montenegro): At the outset, let me join others in welcoming the holding of this high-level meeting, which provides us with an opportunity to assess achievements, gaps and challenges in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and other relevant legal instruments. We truly believe that this meeting will provide us with a productive exchange of views on our experiences in combating human trafficking.

Montenegro aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/67/PV.77).

Trafficking in persons is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights. To combat it, the full engagement of all stakeholders is required. Montenegro's determination in combating human trafficking can be seen in a number of activities that our Government has been pursuing. Our institutional and legal frameworks have been significantly improved as we have sought to comply with the international legal standards in the area of combating human trafficking. The coordination of the anti-trafficking activities of the relevant State bodies and non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations is conducted by the Office for the Fight against Trafficking in Human Beings. The Office has established a tripartite commission made up of representatives from the Supreme State Prosecutor's Office, the Supreme Court and the Police Directorate. Based on information collected from those institutions, the Office compiles statistics on victims of trafficking and monitors the course of criminal proceedings on trafficking in persons.

Montenegro is a State party to all international legal instruments on combating trafficking in persons, in particular the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

The Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Persons (2012-2018), adopted last year, and its biannual action plan, constitute our national policy for combating trafficking in persons. The Strategy defines objectives, principles and activities for combating trafficking in persons, as well as specific measures for improving efficiency in the established system for combating human trafficking in the public, private and civil sectors. The Strategy focuses on six areas — prevention and education; the identification of human trafficking victims; assistance, protection and reintegration for victims; efficient prosecution; international cooperation; and coordination and partnership with the private and civil sectors. The Government of Montenegro has established a working group for monitoring the implementation of the national Strategy, which is composed of representatives of the relevant ministries and other State bodies and observers from intergovernmental organizations and foreign missions.

As a result of our awareness of the importance of the participation and cooperation of all actors, including representatives of civil society, two important documents have been signed for the purposes of efficiently addressing trafficking in persons in Montenegro. The first is a memorandum of cooperation between State institutions and non-governmental organizations, which defines the responsibilities of each body and establishes operational procedures for handling human trafficking cases. The second is the Protocol of Cooperation with the Union of Employers. Non-governmental organizations play a key role in the field of action against trafficking in persons in Montenegro, through awareness-raising activities, training, assistance to victims and participation in international projects. With regard to assistance measures for victims of trafficking, the Government has taken responsibility for fully financing specialized shelter arrangements for victims of human trafficking.

Unfortunately, like many other countries, Montenegro is considered to be a transit country for trafficking in persons. Trafficking in persons in Montenegro is not present as a general phenomenon, but exists, rather, at the level of individual cases. The Government of Montenegro has made significant efforts to prevent and suppress trafficking in persons through public awareness campaigns, education in elementary and secondary schools, and the training of the relevant professionals. Those activities are aimed at achieving

a better understanding of, and providing enhanced education about, the phenomenon and its prevention.

Montenegro has strategically oriented itself towards bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the fight against human trafficking and actively participates in the work of international organizations and initiatives aimed at combating that complex phenomenon. The Government has implemented, through cooperation with international organizations, a large number of regional projects aimed at strengthening international cooperation mechanisms. The implementation of a project of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development resulted in establishing a unique and effective procedure for all institutional activities related to assisting and protecting victims of human trafficking in South-Eastern Europe. In that regard, Montenegro recently hosted a regional training programme on the theme "Capacity-building for combating trafficking for labour exploitation".

A joint declaration on strengthening transnational cooperation in human trafficking in the countries of South-Eastern Europe was the result of many years of collaboration among the national coordinators for combating trafficking in human beings of the countries of the region. The declaration emphasizes the importance of cross-border cooperation with partners in the wider European region, aimed at preventing human trafficking, protecting the rights of those who have been exploited and punishing perpetrators.

On the bilateral level, the Government of Montenegro is undertaking activities that will lead to the signing of agreements of cooperation on combating trafficking in persons with its neighbours.

Almost every country in the world is affected by trafficking in persons. Therefore, the successful fight against human trafficking must include a multisectoral approach and concerted international cooperation, the implementation of effective measures in preventing and suppressing trafficking in persons, punishing perpetrators and protecting victims, as well as mandatory partnerships involving State institutions and the private and civil sectors at the national, regional and international levels.

Mr. García González (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to convey my delegation's appreciation for the initiative of the President of the General Assembly to appraise the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, adopted in 2010. Likewise, I would like to convey my appreciation to the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Cape Verde for their leadership in preparing this high-level meeting.

We wish to note our preference for achieving procedural agreement for this type of event with advance notice and clarity, given that the short amount of time between the adoption the resolution scheduling this meeting (resolution 67/260) and the meeting itself did not make it easy for our country to participate at as high a level as we would have liked. Nevertheless, we thank the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime for its efforts geared to provide data, coordination and assistance in helping Member States and civil society to eliminate trafficking in persons. We would like in particular to highlight the publication of the 2012 *Global Report on the Trafficking in Persons*, which clearly identifies the trends and challenges that the international community is facing in eliminating this scourge.

El Salvador would like to acknowledge the work and commitment of Belarus, both in New York and Vienna, as well as its dynamism and dedication in combating the trafficking in persons.

As a signatory and State party to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, El Salvador notes the importance of applying the four pillars of the Plan of Action. On that basis, we have some assessments and progress to highlight in that regard.

In 2012, my country set up its national council against trafficking in persons, which is made up of representatives of various ministries, to raise the level of commitment of the Salvadoran State in order to address the prosecution, combating and prevention of the scourge, as well as to provide care and rehabilitation to victims through the following efforts.

With respect to prevention, the President of the El Salvador, Mr. Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena, together with the national council against trafficking in persons, adopted a national policy on the matter that comprehensively addresses the crime while highlighting prevention as a key pillar, among several, and sets up partnerships with governmental, non-governmental, municipal and international entities, with the aim of raising awareness and preventing the crime of

trafficking in persons at the national level by making the problem more visible and through public awareness and identifying corporate responsibility as a key player in prevention.

In the area of prevention, in 2012 we worked on drafting a law banning trafficking in persons in El Salvador and reformed the criminalization of trafficking in persons and related crimes in the Salvadoran penal code in order to have better tools to prosecute the crime and enforce the law. We expect those proposals to be presented to the Legislative Assembly this year. Similarly, in order to identify and combat crimes of trafficking in persons and migrants, we have produced a manual for immigration agents to help them address trafficking in migrants. That has led to the rescue of some victims and the capture of a series of criminals. Other measures include strict internal entry and exit controls for children and young people in order to protect those groups against possible violation of their human rights.

With regard to the prosecution of this crime, the Office of the Prosecutor of El Salvador, in coordination with the national civil police, has established new criteria aimed at achieving tougher sentences. They are working together to address trafficking in persons and are conducting aggressive operations in order to identify places of exploitation.

In the area of strengthening alliances, we have put considerable effort into cooperating with other States, both in southern Central America and in Latin America in general. Our national council on trafficking in persons is a participant in a regional coalition against such trafficking, with the aim of strengthening and expanding communication with other countries in Central America in order to address this issue comprehensively.

I would like to conclude by highlighting my country's holistic vision with regard to the fight against trafficking in persons. Eliminating trafficking goes far beyond the stakeholders — the States, civil society, and United Nations agencies that bring us together today. We need political commitment and the international mechanisms necessary to make progress in this area. We therefore urge the international community to work together to eradicate trafficking in persons.

Ms. Čolaković (Bosnia and Herzegovina): We thank the President for organizing this high-level meeting to evaluate the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and are grateful for the opportunity to discuss such an important issue. The implementation of the provisions of the Global Plan of Action, as well as of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, is the subject of this gathering. I hope that today's meeting will provide additional impetus and a results-oriented response to today's challenges. This is also an opportunity to raise awareness of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund and garner support for it, as well as to commend the significant and effective work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Human trafficking is a serious crime against humanity and one of the most flagrant violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Every nation in the world is affected by trafficking, whether it is a country of origin, transit or destination for victims, and the most vulnerable are those that are undergoing economic or political transitions. Despite the fact that so much effort has been expended on this problem, human trafficking persists, and serious challenges remain. The reason for this situation lies primarily in the fact that trafficking in persons is a type of crime, often organized, that enables the perpetrators to reap enormous illegal benefits and, through that, power and influence in society.

Other reasons for such crimes are high levels of unemployment and poverty and a lack of opportunity for younger generations, along with a grave socioeconomic situation in general. Confronted with such difficulties, the people in this kind of environment are attempting to make a living when they are recruited by traffickers. Recruitment methods are numerous; the most common is deceiving victims with false promises of a better life, employment and economic independencend. And there are worse methods, which include crude psychological and physical abuse, blackmail and threats.

We stress Bosnia and Herzegovina's commitment to fighting human trafficking. It is still not fully under control, however. We have been actively implementing our State action plan for combating human trafficking, with activities that include strengthening the support framework, capacity-building for the relevant institutions and organizations, preventing trafficking, protecting victims, prosecuting the perpetrators of offences, strengthening partnerships between the Government and non-government sectors, and improving international cooperation.

The Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina has also prepared a new strategy and action plan for combating trafficking in persons for the period 2013-2015, based on analysis of the implementation and achievements of the previous plan. While the strategy and action plan were being developed, we collected the opinions of numerous relevant institutions and of non-governmental and international organizations dealing with human trafficking, and a public discussion was held. The European Commission provided expert assistance in order to bring the documents in line with European Union standards. After identifying deficiencies during the earlier period in Bosnia and Herzegovina's legislation with regard to criminal offences connected with trafficking in human beings, authorities made additional efforts towards proposing a possible solution through amendments to the criminal code, to bring it into line with regional legislation as well as international standards.

Our Ministry of Security has signed a protocol with two non-governmental organizations that provide assistance and accommodation to foreign victims of human trafficking, while the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees has signed a protocol with three non-governmental organizations that provide support and accommodation for domestic victims. In addition, Bosnia and Herzegovina has a few shelters and safe houses that primarily take care of women and children victims of domestic violence and, if necessary, provide shelter to victims of trafficking and prostitution. There are also special projects aimed at removing the causes of trafficking and supporting prevention programmes in municipalities where cases of human trafficking have occurred. Furthermore, all data on possible victims of trafficking in human beings is collected by the prosecutor's offices, law enforcement agencies and non-governmental organizations.

There is a lot of work to be done to combat human trafficking and to protect its victims. We look forward to interactive debate during this high-level event.

Mr. Kydyrov (Kyrgyzstan): At the outset, let me thank the President of the General Assembly for having organized this high-level meeting. As a member of the Friends United in the Fight against Human Trafficking, Kyrgyzstan attaches great importance to the consolidation of international efforts in combating this global threat.

We believe that in recent years there has been significant progress in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, especially in the development of a legal framework, regional consultative processes and capacity-building at the national level. We highly appreciate the coordinating activities of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; the comprehensive approach by the United Nations Development Programme (UNPD), the International Organization for Migration, the International Labour Organization, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and other international organizations; and the establishment of the United Nations Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking.

We believe that, over the years, we have managed to achieve real results through interactions with the civil society sector and with the broad participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in programmes to prevent trafficking and assist victims. At the same time, we support the proposals on the need for further comprehensive measures to strengthen the fight against human trafficking and the implementation of best practices based on the situation before us.

Kyrgyzstan, in accordance with the Global Plan of Action and its international obligations, has implemented a set of measures to promote a national anti-trafficking system. In the past year, we developed a national plan of action to combat trafficking in persons in the Kyrgyz Republic for the period 2012 to 2015. Among other things, that document introduces a number of changes to the legislation to tighten administrative and criminal liability for crimes of human trafficking and adopts measures to increase public awareness. The action plan also aims to strengthen cooperation between different State structures of the Kyrgyz Republic, international organizations and NGOs.

One of the key areas concerns assisting victims of trafficking, including by facilitating their return to their homeland and providing legal, medical and psychological assistance. Recently, a resource centre for children was established with UNDP support to help children in difficult situations and prevent them from becoming possible victims of trafficking.

We believe that the continued growth of illegal migration and the scope of trafficking in human beings require further strengthening of regional cooperation. In that regard, it should be noted that, in December

2010, the Commonwealth of Independent States adopted a cooperation programme for combating trafficking in human beings for the period 2011 to 2013. The main objectives of that programme are to further expand and strengthen the international legal framework for cooperation; unify and harmonize national legislation in the field of combating human trafficking and providing assistance to victims; improve the interaction between the competent authorities, both international and non-governmental organizations; and carry out coordinated actions to prevent and combat organized criminal activities.

The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) has made a significant contribution to strengthening regional cooperation. The relevant structures of the CSTO carry out annual joint preventative actions and special operations under the name "Illegal" to counter illegal migration and human trafficking.

It is important that combating human trafficking remain a priority in this year's agenda of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, under the chairmanship of Ukraine, and that an international conference is to be organized on this problem.

According to recent studies, there are more than 100 million migrant workers around the world. Due to the financial crisis and widespread unemployment, labour migration continues to increase. Against that backdrop, we believe it is crucial to step up efforts to develop coordinated actions to combat trafficking in persons connected with forced labour. It is necessary to implement foreign employment programmes aimed at managing legal labour migration between the countries of origin of migrants and their countries of destination. It is also necessary to continue organizing targeted programmes aimed at strengthening the capacity of migration services, law enforcement structures and the judiciary, as well as the introduction of modern information technologies.

In conclusion, let me express the strong commitment of the Kyrgyz Republic to comprehensive international cooperation in further implementing the Global Plan of Action to Combat Human Trafficking.

Mr. Lupan (Republic of Moldova): The Republic of Moldova aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union (see A/67/PV.77). However, I wish to add some relevant remarks in my national capacity. I will deliver an abridged version of my statement, which will be available in its entirety on the Permanent Mission website.

Trafficking in persons is a global phenomenon that recognizes no boundaries, no Governments and no rules, except its own. Most unfortunately, it is a grave violation of the human rights and dignity of the people and countries affected. It is a phenomenon that affects us all.

Concerted efforts are necessary due to its global nature, as mentioned by many speakers today. Every nation can contribute to the eradication of this phenomenon. Every experience matters. That is why we are here: to learn from each other. However, we are also here to find joint ways to deal with trafficking.

Our national experience has shown that, through political will and partnerships, we can make progress, and more can be done in the future. Over recent years, therefore, the authorities of the Republic of Moldova have rebuilt our anti-trafficking system on the basis of the "four Ps" paradigm: prevention, prosecution, protection and partnership.

The Republic of Moldova recognizes that, in order to achieve good results, we need to have a systemic approach, from a legal perspective to justice-sector efforts. With the support of international partners — in our case, the International Organization for Migration and its mission in Moldova — our existing legislative and police frameworks on preventing and fighting against trafficking have been aligned with both European and international standards.

In the light of the emerging new trends in trafficking in human beings mentioned in the 2012 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime report, which indicate an increased focus on children, the Moldovan Government ratified the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. We also amended our criminal law to criminalize offences under the Convention.

Moving from the legal framework to the activities performed by the Government, our authorities are implementing a national plan of action for preventing and combating trafficking in human beings for the period 2012-2013. The plan encompasses 102 concrete actions to be taken by the Republic of Moldova, as a result of the recommendations of the Council of Europe, the observations of the United States Department of State report on trafficking in persons, the universal periodic

review and the priorities of the European Union strategy for the eradication of trafficking in human beings for the period 2012 to 2016. In 2012, Moldovan authorities organized more than 100 training events and workshops for more than 1,800 experts involved in anti-trafficking efforts. Every law enforcement body in the Republic of Moldova has created a separate anti-trafficking unit within its ranks, in what could perhaps be an interesting example for other Member States.

In terms of practical penal measures, on the basis of existing information related to trafficking in human beings and illegal migration, the Moldovan licensing agency has issued nine decisions to withdraw, and 13 decisions to suspend, the licenses of companies dealing with the employment of citizens abroad. During 2012, 24 inquiry committees of law enforcement bodies were also created; 11 focused on detecting trafficking in human beings, one on child trafficking and 10 on illegal migration. All have initiated criminal cases. The Republic of Moldova received follow-up from these commissions from eight States with whom we cooperate, covering 15 of the criminal cases started. We also received 31 letters addressed to Moldovan courts, initiated by our partner States, on issues pertaining to trafficking in human beings. Twenty-six responses have been finalized and five are in progress.

To help affected people recover and rebuild their lives, we have strengthened protection by setting up a national referral system for victims and potential victims of human trafficking. That system has been in place since 2006 as a mechanism operating throughout the country through joint teams made up of Government and civil society entities.

We have also instituted a data-harmonization mechanism to provide cross-referencing on trafficking in human beings across all governmental bodies.

As a consequence of that systemic approach to trafficking in persons, the Republic of Moldova moved from tier 3 to tier 2 in the list of countries affected by trafficking, according to the 2012 report on trafficking in persons prepared by the United States Department of State.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my intervention, national efforts alone are not enough to fight this problem, and more needs to be done in close cooperation with our partners, as this is a global phenomena affecting all of us. Addressing its root causes is impossible without information-sharing, bilateral country agreements — of which I have already given an example — and the implementation of proactive and inclusive projects focused on countries of destination and transit, and in particular countries of origin, most of which are developing countries. Such cooperation is necessary to enhance national anti-trafficking capacities, reduce international criminality in migration and trafficking and create fair conditions for the secure and legal movement of people while also respecting their right to non-discriminatory migration.

To conclude, let me once again emphasize the full and continuous commitment of the Republic of Moldova to supporting and encouraging further efforts to address this phenomenon at the international level, as well as to express our expectation that, with United Nations support, the work of this high-level meeting will lead to practical measures in all interested countries, including the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): First of all, I would like to extend our appreciation for the hard work carried out in the organization of this very important meeting. I would especially thank the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Cape Verde for their hard and tireless efforts.

Human trafficking is a modern form of slavery and a crime against humanity. Is is also the third most lucrative form of organized crime, after drugs and the arms trade.

Cooperation and coordination among Member States, United Nations institutions, the relevant international and regional bodies and non-State actors — such as civil society, the private sector and the media — by sharing experiences, identifying best practices and reflecting on mistakes and lessons learned, are essential to combatting human trafficking. From that perspective, this high-level meeting on the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons is both important and timely. We believe that the exchange of ideas and views in this meeting will produce fruitful results that will guide prevention efforts in the years to come.

The geographical position of Turkey between Europe and Asia makes it a target country for human trafficking. Over the past few decades, we have stepped up our determined fight against human trafficking under the framework of the parameters defined in the Global Plan of Action and the Trafficking in Persons Protocol: prevention, protection, prosecution and

cooperation. Important progress has been achieved in identifying victims of human trafficking, providing direct support to them victims, ensuring their voluntary and safe repatriation, raising awareness and increasing standards of protection.

Combatting human trafficking requires a comprehensive approach. In that respect, our national task force to combat human trafficking was established in 2002, under the leadership of the Turkish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The task force is a coordinating body that brings together representatives of the security sector, public sector organizations, civil society and representatives of national branches of the relevant international organizations. National action plans have been in force since 2003. The ninth development plan, covering the years 2007 to 2013, also stresses the fight against human trafficking. The Turkish Ministry of the Interior is cooperating with the relevant public sector organizations, non-State actors and civil society to formulate new legislation to address the remaining problems and deal with new challenges.

On the social and humanitarian side, support centres have been established since 2004 in major cities to extend legal, psychological and medical services to victims of human trafficking. We have stepped up our cooperation with the International Labour Organization to ensure voluntary and safe repatriation. Internet, telephone and mobile telecommunication technologies are being employed on a 24-hour basis to provide constant support to victims. In addition, nationwide awareness programmess have been launched since 2008, in order to draw public attention to the gravity of the issue.

Human trafficking is a transborder issue, which requires international and regional cooperation. With that perspective in mind, Turkey has become part of all major international conventions and has reviewed its national legislation to ensure full compliance. As one of the objectives of the Global Plan of Action, the Turkish criminal code has been amended to include human trafficking as a specific category of crime, and strict penalties for offenders have been introduced.

We support and actively contribute to efforts undertaken within the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, NATO, the Council of Europe, the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization and the Regional Cooperation Council. We attach particular importance to our cooperation with the European Union as part of our accession process. We have signed bilateral cooperation agreements with many of our regional partners and included human trafficking clauses in the security cooperation agreements signed with over 40 countries.

Much remains to be done to put an end to the security and financial threats and human costs caused by human trafficking. We must employ sustained efforts and constant vigilance to that end. Today's high-level meeting is a sign of our willingness and determination in that respect.

Mr. Vilović (Croatia): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for the opportunity to address this meeting and to exchange information on the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the progress achieved, as well as to exchange experiences and best practices in the suppression of trafficking in human beings on the global level, including in the Republic of Croatia.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement of the European Union (see A/67/PV.77), which the Assembly heard yesterday. In that regard, I would like to make some additional remarks in my national capacity.

Croatia strongly supports and has actively participated in all international efforts to develop multilateral approaches to combat transnational organized crime, including one of its worst forms — trafficking in human beings.

The ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Trafficking in Persons Protocol and Smuggling of Migrants Protocol in 2002 was one of the first key activities of Croatia in this field. We believe that those documents initiated the modern fight against this evil. It should be noted that Croatia was among the first countries to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, which I believe will contribute further to effective protection of the human rights of victims.

Since then, numerous activities have been carried out in our national system that demonstrate the effective implementation of those Conventions and principles to combat trafficking in human beings, with a special commitment to addressing this complex matter in a comprehensive way. Let me emphasize that Croatia has established a human rights-based and victim-

centred approach in combating trafficking in human beings, which is illustrated by the fact that victims are given temporary residency permits regardless of their participation in court proceedings and the fact that in Croatia no victim is deported; there is only voluntary repatriation of victims.

Croatia has recognized the importance of the multi-agency approach and has established a functioning national referral mechanism through a protocol on identification, help and assistance to victims of trafficking in human beings. That mechanism strengthens cooperation and coordination among law enforcement, medical institutions, social workers, immigration and border service, and non-governmental organizations.

The office of the national coordinator continues to make efforts to improve the established system and legislative framework. In the most recent amendments to the criminal code defining trafficking in human beings, we have also included the illegal adoption of children as a form of trafficking in human beings.

The new national plan for suppression of trafficking in human beings covers the period from 2012 until 2015. Special attention is given to the suppression of labour and sexual exploitation; strengthening cooperation between law enforcement and States' prosecutor's offices; research on the correlation between forced prostitution and trafficking in human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation, as well as the correlation between forced labour and trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation; and public awareness campaigns and the education of target groups.

Furthermore, Croatia pays special attention to international and regional cooperation. It must also be emphasized that regional activities are very important, because it is only through collaboration with the authorities from neighbouring countries, which usually comprise the same human trafficking chain, that this problem can be suppressed successfully and efficiently.

Trafficking in human beings represents a gross violation of human rights. In that regard, we welcome this high-level meeting and look forward to substantial and fruitful debates, which should provide renewed impetus in fighting human trafficking.

Let me conclude by stating the commitment of the Republic of Croatia to the goals and objectives of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings.

Mr. Mukerji (India): I thank the President for organizing this important meeting. I also thank the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and other speakers for their important contributions on the subject of combating trafficking in persons.

The United Nations articulated a clear vision on this subject by launching the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, in August 2010. The Plan mandated the international community to address the problem of human trafficking in a holistic and comprehensive manner. It must be implemented through integrated, balanced, coherent, results-oriented and people-centric policies.

The "four Ps" — prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership — are a new clarion call in this fight, which needs to be adhered to and implemented. The new element of partnership is crucial. It recognizes effective partnerships with civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector as an integral part of this fight.

The 2012 *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, issued by the UNODC, is the first such attempt to present a global overview of trends and challenges in trafficking in persons. Notwithstanding the information gaps that still persist, the findings of the report are a grim reminder of the growing global scale of trafficking in persons and of the complexities involved in dealing with this issue. According to the report, women and children remain particularly vulnerable to trafficking, especially with respect to trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour.

While more than 130 countries have criminalized trafficking, progress in conviction remains limited. These findings underline the basic fact that while national efforts to eliminate trafficking are essential, it is also critical to have greater cohesion in the international community's efforts to prevent, prosecute and punish those involved in trafficking in persons, especially through organized crime. Capacity-building, as the report notes, is a significant challenge to be addressed.

India is firmly committed to a world free of human trafficking. We live in one of the most densely populated

regions of the world. India ratified the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, in May, 2011. Our commitment is reflected in various national laws and policies. At the level of policy implementation, we have developed strategies that are holistic, participative and inclusive and that are not restricted to direct intervention against trafficking alone. We are adopting a victim-centric approach to the issues.

Anti-trafficking nodal cells have been set up both at the central and provincial levels. We are working with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to strengthen law enforcement responses to trafficking in persons in India. A comprehensive scheme for the prevention of trafficking, rescue, rehabilitation, reintegration and repatriation of the victims of commercial sexual exploitation is already in place. India also seeks to eradicate trafficking by empowering the vulnerable sections of our society who are its potential victims. That is also one of the core objectives of the Global Plan of Action.

The international community, including the United Nations, must contribute and help States seeking financial and technical assistance to build capacity and put in place administrative and legal frameworks — institutional reforms that are imperative if we are to combat the challenge. The UNODC has an important role to play in enhancing training and capacity-building to strengthen law enforcement responses.

We are concerned that, despite greater international cooperation, the growing global trend of trafficking in persons has not been eradicated. We need to redouble our efforts in fighting that scourge. India stands ready to work with the international community in that regard.

Mr. Kogda (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): My delegation welcomes the convening of this high-level meeting and fully aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Côte d'Ivoire on behalf of the African Group (see A/67/PV.77).

Many countries around the world, like Burkina Faso have enacted laws and acceded to international legal instruments to completely abolish trafficking in human beings. But we must note that millions of people continue to be victims of that practice. Statistics bear out that assertion by showing that there are 2.5 million victims of trafficking in persons, of which only 1 per cent were saved from it in 2012. The vile practice from another era is part of the disintegration of human values, the deterioration of social morals and a worsening of poverty, an increase in mercenary spirit and the intensification of conflicts. Unfortunately, most often, women and children are the most exposed to the scourge, which reduces them to the status of merchandise bought and sold for commercial, sexual or labour exploitation. Of greater concern is the fact that children are increasingly used in trafficking as bait in criminal and terrorist acts or as cannon fodder in armed conflicts.

That is why this high-level meeting is an auspicious opportunity for the international community, especially for the United Nations, to assess the efforts undertaken to combat trafficking in human beings and, in particular, to evaluate the implementation of the Global Plan of Action adopted in 2010 to that end.

In Burkina Faso, since 1999, the Government has been resolutely committed to combating trafficking in human beings at many levels. Domestically, in 2002, the Government ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto and has taken preventive measures and steps to protect victims by creating a national monitoring committee against trafficking in persons and associated practices; adopting a law in 2008 designed to combat trafficking in persons and associated practices and leading to penalties against those guilt of trafficking; awareness-raising and training of State and non-State actors and opinion leaders on the harmful effects of child exodus; establishing a legal aid fund for victims to again access to courts without having to pay court costs; and adopting a procedure for the repatriation of women and children who have been victims of trafficking, under conditions that serve to fully protect their rights.

At the international level, Burkina Faso participates in the International Labour Organization/International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour Programme on Combating Trafficking in Children for Labour Exploitation in West and Central Africa. In addition, in the context of European Union-African Union partnership, Burkina Faso oversaw the negotiations and drafting of the Ouagadougou Action Plan against the Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which was adopted in Tripoli in November 2006.

We must increase our efforts and political will at all levels to eradicate the arcane practice of trafficking in persons. It is imperative in terms of promoting and protecting human rights. Whether it be the international community, States, international and regional organizations or other stakeholders in civil society, all must play their part.

Many national laws have been adopted, several bilateral and regional agreements have been signed, many international legal instruments have been ratified — all of them need only to be implemented. Let us respect all the commitments undertaken in the fight against trafficking in human beings. It is certainly within our reach.

Mrs. Miculescu (Romania): Have members ever met a victim of human trafficking? Well, I did, when I was working for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, back 1999. Her name was Marinela; she was 17 and terrified. Trafficked from Romania, she had been coerced into prostitution by a pimp who beat her with numbing regularity. She had been constantly raped and tortured in the sordid, violent and horrific labyrinths of her ordeal. Since then, I must confess, whenever I speak at events like this one, I have been haunted by her sad eyes.

We all know by now that trafficking in persons is one of the worst forms of human rights abuse and one most brutal crimes. It is a multidimensional phenomenon affecting both adults and children, and almost no country in the world today is safe from it. Like all the countries in the European Union, especially those in Eastern Europe, my country is strongly committed to preventing and fighting human trafficking. We believe that combating trafficking is much more than a national duty. The right response, as we have all been saying during the past few days, is a coherent approach at the international level that involves all Governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental stakeholders. Let me share with the General Assembly, as expeditiously as I can, a few key points from Romania's perspective.

First of all, the coherent and universal implementation of the relevant international legal instruments is a starting point in our duty, as trafficking in persons has transnational implications. Our common language in the matter is provided by such current international legal instruments as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress And Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which give us the legal basis for the protection of victims and the prosecution of perpetrators.

Promoting the universality of the Protocol is one of the main objectives of the Global Plan of Action we have been debating during the past couple of days. In that respect, allow me to join the appeal made in the statement of the European Union (see A/67/PV.77) and urge all States to ratify the Palermo Convention and its Protocol without delay, as well as to coordinate efforts to implement it fully. Romania did just that in 2002, and we now have in force a full range of domestic legal instruments that complement each other with specific strategic policies.

Secondly, enhancing collective efforts for the prevention of human trafficking is more necessary than ever. Awareness campaigns targeting the main risk groups are the essential preventive tool, and we have undertaken many in Romania. Organizations with domestic and international coverage play a crucial role in such campaigns, and they should be permanent partners. However, in addition to the general public, service providers that may have contact with victims, such as notaries public and transportation and tourism companies, should also be involved.

Thirdly, developing an international mechanism for victim referral is of the utmost importance for increasing the level of victim protection and assistance. Our national authority has developed and promoted a transnational referral mechanism for victims of trafficking based on the implementation of our national mechanism for victim identification and referral, with concrete international cooperation with main destiantion countries. We constantly bear in mind the fact that assisting victims means addressing their needs on a case-by-case basis in the short, medium and long term.

Fourthly, more effective prosecution, aimed at bringing perpetrators to justice, is possible through inter-agency and transnational cooperation. I am pleased to say that a positive trend in criminal investigations for human trafficking in Romania is evident in an increase in the number of convictions. In 2012, for example, the number of convicted traffickers was 55 per cent higher than in the preceding year, and double that of 2010. In 2012, Romanian authorities also concluded a domestic inter-agency coordination protocol aimed

at implementing a project for expanding on the good practices acquired in recent years and increasing the efficiency of the prosecution process.

Partnerships are essential to increasing institutioanal capacity. That is why the Romanian agency working to combat trafficking in persons is currently engaged in several international partnership projects both as a provider of assistance and as a beneficiary of it, most of which have multiple partner countries in Western and Eastern Europe and a regional cooperation approach.

I would like to emphasize the essential role of civil society in the difficult process of eradicating human trafficking. Neither prevention of the crime nor assistance to victims is possible without their involvement and activism. I would like to join others in encouraging a participatory approach to civil society at all levels, and in commending non-governmental organizations for their passion, hard work and dedication.

Finally, I would like to discuss one challenge that will require special attention and resources in the near future —improving data collection and analysis. In our view, having a scientific basis for evaluating and analysing the relevant public policies is essential to effectively preventing and combating human trafficking. This is in line with the recommendations of the 2012 *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). We would like, by the way, to commend UNODC for all its efforts to combat this horrendous crime, and also to thank the Ambassadors of Aus.ria and Cape Verde for their facilitating the organization of this very timely meeting.

Sixty-five years ago, the General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In doing so, Member States essentially proclaimed that all human beings were born free; that no one should be held in slavery or servitude; and that slavery and the slave trade were prohibited in all their forms. It also proclaimed that all human beings should live in dignity and be safe from harm and fear. Today, however, millions of people, most of them children and women, along with other vulnerable groups, are victims of modern-day slavery.

Romania, like every other member of the European Union, remains firmly committed to the global effort to combat this scourge. The keys are, of course, the four words that almost every speaker has mentioned today — prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships. This is not just about politics or demagogic promises. The fight against human trafficking goes deeper than that, into our collective sense of humanity, our collective responsibility for protecting the fundamental and inalienable right of all human beings to enjoy their lives in freedom, dignity and security. That is a responsibility to be upheld by all of us, no matter where or who we are, regardless of race, creed or walk of life. In this there should be no lines to separate us. It is therefore up to all of us to take firm action to turn our societies and communities into places that are less conducive to such dreadful crimes as human trafficking. We should all try hard to give Marinela and her peers their smiles and their lives back.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.